DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 150 063 SO 010 663

AUTHOR Diem, Richard A.
TITLE Social Deviance--A Student Perspective.
PUB DATE 28 Jan 78
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the Southwest Educational Research Association (Austin, Texas, January 28, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Patterns; Codes of Ethics; Drinking; Drug Abuse; Marihuana; Misbehavior; Parent Student Relationship; *Peer Acceptance; Peer Relationship; Research Methodology; *School Environment; School Vandalism; Secondary Education; *Socially Deviant Behavior; Social Science Research; Stealing; *Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior

ABSTRACT

The paper describes a study of deviant behavior among students attending a high school in Texas. All students in the study attended a sociology class taught by a very strict teacher whose rules of behavior conflicted with students' peer group behavior expectations. Participant observation of student behavior in class and interviews with individual students were conducted to identify daily behavior patterns and students' attitudes toward the patterns. Deviant behavior included skippin class, unauthorized smoking, use of drugs, school vandalism, and stealing. It was found that very few students skipped class, and that peers would not report students who did. Smoking restrictions were violated by all students who smoked, and they felt students should have smoking privileges equal to those of teachers. Almost all students had used marijuana and alcohol, and admitted that it was deviant, but would not report the use of drugs to authorities. Vandalism occurred in only a few cases and was condoned by students as long as it did not interfere with individual rights. However, stealing personal property angered students and they reported they would prosecute someone who took their property. Conclusions are that students do not disapprove of deviant behavior unless it directly affects them. Students identified the major cause of deviant behavior as lack of parental control over their children. (AV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED150063

FEB 09 1978

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Richard A. Diem

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

SOCIAL DEVIANCE - A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Richard A. Diem

Assistant Professor of Social Foundation of Education

The University of Texas at San Antonio

Presented to the Annual Meeting of

The Southwest Educational Research Association

Austin, Texas

January 28, 1978

SO 010 663

Social Deviance - A Student Perspective

This paper is an analysis of peer relationships, patterns of social interaction, and behavior differences observed in a high school setting. The study encompassed the prescription, analysis and explanation of behavior patterns viewed within a specific sub-culture of that high school; specifically sociology classes. Two major perspectives were originally posited for analysis: What types of daily behavior patterns take place within this subculture? How are these behaviors analyzed by members of the subculture under observations?

The Site

Participant observation, intensive interviewing, and content analysis of classroom behaviors were conducted over a period of one academic semester in an urban high school. The school used in this study, Big School, is located in Northern Bexar County, Texas. The school attendance area encompasses a region in the Northeast section of the county, and lies totally within the boundaries of the city of San Antonio, Texas.

The population of this school is composed of families representing wide ranges of socio-economic status, levels of attained education, occupation, and age.

Classroom Observations

In the course of this study, 125 hours of participant observations were made. The data collected were examined by means of analytic induction (Robinson 1951; Becker 1958;

Glaser 1965). Information was initially categorized according to a group of mundane classifications: type of event, participants involved, physical setting, time of occurrence, and reaction of participants. This initial analysis was particularly valuable in redirecting the focus of observation to obtain adequate samples of the range of behaviors, events, and situations which involved the students. Further classificatory refinements were developed according to a second typology: acts, activities, meanings, participation, relationships, and settings (Lofland 1971). As the research progressed, data were further grouped and re-grouped according to (1) typologies found to be used by the participants themselves and (2) typologies formed from categorizing participant behaviors. These typologies were used to construct, successively, first - and second - order constructs depicting the total network of social interaction. Through a process of cross-coding and enumeration, relationships among the constructs were developed into propositional, explanatory statements.

The subjects involved in these observations were students in three sociology classes of Big School, High School. Sociology is a social studies elective at Big School. Although there is no tracking in Big School, sociology is considered to be a college preparatory subject and most of the students in these classes were high academic achievers, and those who were interested in going to college. The course is open to both junior and senior students, however the vast majority (95%) in the classes under observation were seniors.

Classification of Observations

In observing these classrooms, different behavior patterns were quickly established. That is, each class acted as a distinct unit. The actions of students in one class did not necessarily reflect those of the other classes in any given situation. The major criteria for patternization of behavior was the teacher. Although she was not the subject of this study, the teacher's reaction to her role and to her students established many behavior patterns. In classifying her behavior, one would have to say that she was from "the old school." When a student did not follow her rules, the student was punished. She did not believe in any type of psychologizing of student problems.

The student reaction to her was very positive. They liked her, respected her, and generally adhered to the rules of the classroom. Certain segments of the students, mainly boys, looked upon her as someone out of touch with their world, and readily verbalized this fact to her.

After observing and talking to the students in these classes for several weeks classifications of student social interactions became identifiable. These were:

(1) students tended to follow their own code of group behavior (2) that these behavior patterns were reinforced through peer group approval (3) that students would not tolerate certain forms of deviant behaviors; especially when those behaviors involved loss of personal property (4) that students put the blame on parents for not controlling and teaching their children satisfactory behavior patterns and (5) behavior identified as deviant by students, was sometimes acceptable to large segments of society.

Analysis of the Observations

Membership in a group implies a set of behaviors and attitudes, on the part of members, consistent with a set of expectations shared by members of that group. These expectations apply to every member of the group although those in positions of leadership or power may exhibit some eccentries. Members both form and conform to the norms expected by the group. Individual behavior is considered appropriate when it is in accord with these norms and the individual is rewarded by the security of membership. Violation of a norm leads to some relatively mild sanction, but persistent violations or truly deviant behavior leads to expulsion or isolation.

The students in this study, were subject both to the expectations of their own group and the expectations of their teacher. That is to say, the students not only had to play a role consistent with the expectations of fellow students but at the same time follow the rules and play the role expected of them by their teacher. Any disputes that arose in the classroom brought out the latest conflict between loyalties to different groups and called for the student to shift back and forth between roles (Freeman, 1972).

Types of Deviant Behaviors

For the purposes of this study, deviant behaviors were those which: (a) Violates a school rule or (b) were identified as being deviant by the students. Using these criteria, the behaviors identified as being deviant were:

(1) Skipping out of class

(2) Unauthorized smoking

(3) Use of drugs (including pot and alcohol)

(4) School vandalism

(5) Stealing

Of the five identified behaviors, only two, skipping out of class and unauthorized smoking, were actually observed. The others were either observed after the fact, school vandalism as an example, or told to the observer in an interview situation, the use of drugs, stealing of school property.

(1) Skipping Class

At Big School, attendance is taken on a per class basis. Each teacher is responsible for reporting those students who are either absent or tardy to the central office.

A list of those students with excused absences is given to each teacher. If a student's name does not appear on this list they are considered to have skipped the class.

Most of the students in the classes observed did not skip class. Attendance for the semester during which the observations took place, was between 90 to 95 % on a daily basis. This was not the case, however, in all classes.

Students readily admitted that they skipped classes. The two most prevalent reasons given for this were (a) boredom and (b) they had something else better to do.

Very few students (60 out of 90) even admitted to reporting other students for skipping classes. They felt that "it was none of their business why a student cut and that they did not want to get involved in other people's problems."

It is interesting to note that the notion of school being boring and work being boring both lead to high rates of absentieism. While working world does not penalize one for not being there, the school is extreme in its enforcement and penalty for non-attendance.

(2) Unauthorized smoking

Students at Big School may smoke in an authorized area in the center courtyard of the school. This area is roped off and supervised by teachers. No smoking is allowed anywhere else on the school grounds, for students.

This rule is violated, with some regularity, by all students who smoke. The restrooms and areas behind the school are used as unauthorized smoking areas by these students.

Most students, who smoked, felt that the idea of a smoking area was alright, but they also felt that they should be allowed to smoke in other areas. They were especially angered over the fact that teachers had a lounge area, inside, that they could use for smoking while they could not smoke in their lounge.

(3) Use of Drugs

Very few students (10/90) had not used drugs. In breaking this down, 70 % (63) said they had used pot, over 90 % had used alcohol. A small percentage (8 %) admitted using pills. None of the students indicated that they had used any other drugs.

Although the majority (74) of these students said that they

considered the use of drugs to be deviant behavior, none of them said that they would report the use of drugs to any school or outside authority. Most (88) said that they would help another student, if they were in distress due to a drug overdose.

(4) School Vandalism

Vandalism included all forms of destroying or mutilating property. Very few students (5) said that they had committed an act of vandalism at Big School. Half knew of students who had vandalized school property. None of the students had reported any acts of school vandalism.

(5) Stealing

Of all the behaviors identified, stealing was the one that the students reacted to the most. All of them said that they would report, and if necessary, prosecute someone who took their property. However, they did not have the same feelings about school property.

If one took school property, it was alright; as long as it did not interfer with one's class work and activities.

Conclusions

In any society a significant portion of all social regulation is regulated by the individual's development of commitment to social norms. There may be circumstances when one cannot live up to these norms. (Hewitt, 1970). Clearly this is the case when most students violate school rules.

They are caught between two groups, their peers and

their teachers trying to dominate their values. In this struggle, the school is very crucial as it has control over the adolescent for so many hours of the day. In doing this it brings together groups for extended periods of time and it reacts to those groups far beyond normal social circumstances (Bell, 1971).

Bell (1971) tells us that all adolescents develop some patterns of delinquency, no matter what socio-economic class they come from. The reasons for this are that some of these offenses are expected to occur (i.e. skipping classes) and are suggested both by peers and to a lesser degree tolerated by those in positions of authority.

In Big School, the patterns of deviancy were those experienced with many middle class adolescents: Vandalism, truancy, drug experimentation and class room disruption (Bell, 1971). A classification, as to when these acts were done or who did them were not obtained, but it seemed clear that most of these students had either seen or been an active participant in one or more of these acts. However, in a study similar to this one, done in Cook County, Illinois, most students who were involved with the breaking of school rules were young (14-16) and male, and the vast majority (85 % in the study) had seen or participated in breaking a rule while in high school. (Diem, 1975). There seemed to be no effort, on the part of students, to rationalize behavior. They explained that they did, but not why they did it. The students also expected no explaination of deviant behavior from others. The attitude "do your own thing and leave

me alone" seemed to prevade the observed group.

One must wonder if these attitudes will carry over into adult-life. Will these students accept all forms of behavior, as long as it does not directly affect them? Is this toleration of all types of behavior merely an ave-role phenomena or, is it as Roszak (1972) says "that our values are drastically changing and the acceptance of deviant behavior will eventually lead that behavior to become the norm."

Perhaps most important, to this study, is the reaction of the school as a social institution. Public schools, historically, have been the most conservative of all of our institutions. Will these bastions of American Values change or will they try to make their inhabitants conform to what have been the established values of American Society.

Finally, the students, when asked, said that the major cause for deviant behavior was the lack of parental control over their children. This would seem to indicate that adolescents need, and expect, a set of rules and values thay can identify and adhere to if they are to avoid deviant behavior.

REFERENCES

Becker, Howard S., "Problems of Inference and Proof in Participant Observation," American Sociological Review, 1958, 28, 652-660.

Bell, Robert R., Social Deviance-A Substantive Analysis. Homewood, IL: Dorsey, Press, 1971.

Diem, Richard A., "Conflict Among Parents, Teachers, and Students in a Suburban High School," unpublished Ph.D dissentation, Northwestern University, June, 1975.

Glaser, Barney G., "The Constant Comparative Method of Qualitative Analysis," Social Problems, 1965, 16, 436-445.

Hewitt, John P., Social Stratification and Deviant Behavior. New York: Random House, 1970.

Lofland, John, Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide To Qualitative Observation and Analysis. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1971.

Robinson, W. S., "The Logical Structure of Analytic Induction," American Sociological Review, 1951, 16, 812-818.

Roszak, Theodore, The Making of a Counter Culture, New York: Doubleday, 1969.

Taylor, Charlotte P., Transforming Schools-A Social Perspective, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976.

Wilson, S. A., "The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research," Review of Educational Research, 1977, Vol. 47, No. 2, 245-265.